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# THE AMERICAN JOURNAL OF SOCIOLOGY

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## THE JUNIOR REPUBLIC. I.

THE Junior Republic is an experiment in charity, penology, and pedagogy. It carries to a consistent extreme the principles of self help and individuality towards which thinkers and workers in these fields for a decade or more have been urging. Various of its devices have recently been hit upon here and there in reformatories, schools, and child-saving organizations, but it has remained for Mr. George to begin at the foundation and to build up a complete system, untrammelled by traditions, institutions, or trustees. And now that the Republic has become famous, the fascination of its story and its apparent simplicity have led to the establishment of similar Republics elsewhere and the adoption of certain of its features in existing institutions. It is in the effort to imitate the Republic without fully appreciating its *motif*, that discredit is likely to come upon its principles, and the conclusion to be drawn that only under the personal inspiration of a Mr. George can it succeed, or that it is anything more than the fanciful pastime of a harmless philanthropy. In order to show that it has been developed not as an amusement but to meet the most fundamental practical problem of sociology—the education of personal character for both individual and social responsibilities—I can begin with no more convincing recital than the constitutional history of the Republic.

In 1887 Mr. W. R. George, then about 21 years of age, whose home had been among the hills near Freeville, Tompkins county, N. Y., went to New York City to follow a business calling. All of his leisure time he occupied in making the acquaintance of the street boys and girls on the East Side, in visiting boys' clubs, teaching Sunday-school classes, and becoming deeply attached to these urchins. Impressed by their cramped life, he determined, in 1890, to take a company of thirty to his home near Freeville, where he spent his own vacations in August. He secured railway expenses through the *Tribune* Fresh Air Fund, and relied upon his relatives and neighbors to furnish provisions. His only purpose at this time was to give the boys and girls a thoroughly happy outing. The second summer—1891—he took a company of 200, all to be kept on one farm in tents, and from that time to the present the number has ranged from 150 to 200, of whom about one-fourth have been girls. The people and churches of the neighborhood responded bountifully with food and clothing, and these were distributed freely among the youthful claimants. Four summers of this experience focused his attention on its essentially degrading effects. One-tenth of the children came there as a "gang," to fight and brawl and terrorize the country—nine-tenths came for the food and the clothing that they could take back to their parents. From arrival to departure their constant clamour was, "What are dese farmers goin' to give us to take back?" "The woman I was by last year gave me two dresses, and sent us three barrels of potatoes in the winter. What are youse going to give me?" and so on. Here were two conditions for Mr. George to meet, crime and pauperism, the very life and moving spirit of the political and charitable system of New York City and its tenements. And the fact that 200 of these budding criminals and paupers were on his hands made him think. One day he remonstrated with a crowd of them, "Why do you do nothing but beg and demand things to take back with you? You have done nothing to earn them; they are not yours." A little Italian girl, spokesman of the crowd, drew herself up and said, "Mr. George, wot

do youse tink we are here fur, anyway?" "That's the talk," growled the crowd.

The next summer — 1894 — Mr. George determined to make



W. R. GEORGE

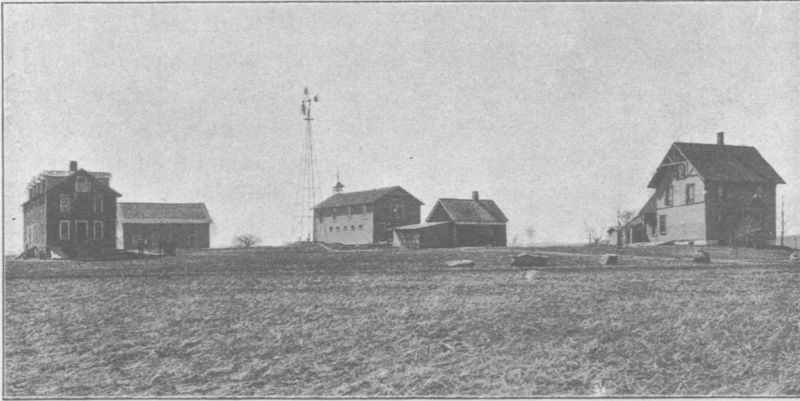
them work for what they took home. Boxes of clothing sent in by the philanthropic were no longer passed around, but notice was given that only hard work with pick and shovel would be considered a claim for such. The grumbling and muttering were general and ominous. One boy, however, after a period of

thinking, offered to work five days for a suit of clothes—the price set by Mr. George. The others hectored him and called him a fool for working to get what was his by right, but when he walked away with his new suit, the pride of honest ownership, and the immediate capitulation of many others, were the first suggestion towards the Republic's cure for pauperism.

The problem of crime was equally hard. Mr. George made rules against smoking, gambling, stealing, fighting, etc., but how to punish for violations was beyond his comprehension. He even tried the whip, but that failed. He then resorted to a vicarious expedient, offering himself to be whipped, and compelling the culprit to do the whipping. This worked better, but crime still flourished. Finally, in 1894, he inaugurated a public trial of every alleged offender, the decision to be awarded by the town meeting. On the suggestion of the boys a jury of the best citizens was selected by Mr. George himself for such trials. At this time instead of corporal punishment he substituted fines of a graded number of hours' work. The stone pile was superintended by an adult, one of the assistants, and when one day he was sick the boys proposed that in his place be appointed Banjo, a member of the "Park" gang, which was an offshoot of the famous "Why-ho" gang. Only necessity compelled Mr. George to accept this radical innovation, and that for but one day, but its startling success was the first eye-opener on the possibilities of self-government. Banjo got much better and harder work out of the boys than did the adult, for they could not deceive him, and on the other hand Banjo himself became the most self-respecting upholder of law and order in the entire community. He was retained permanently in office.

The summer of 1894 was full of many kinds of experiments, Mr. George knew that something was wrong and he was feeling for remedies. After the children went home he set to thinking. Three facts had impressed themselves upon him. First, the keen sense of justice and power of discrimination shown by the boys in all the trials by jury; second, their superior powers of administration and discipline over their fellows compared with those

shown by adults ; third, the superior wisdom of the suggestions they had made in modes of government and administration compared with those which had occurred to himself. He therefore reasoned that they might equally well *make* the laws as judge



HOTEL

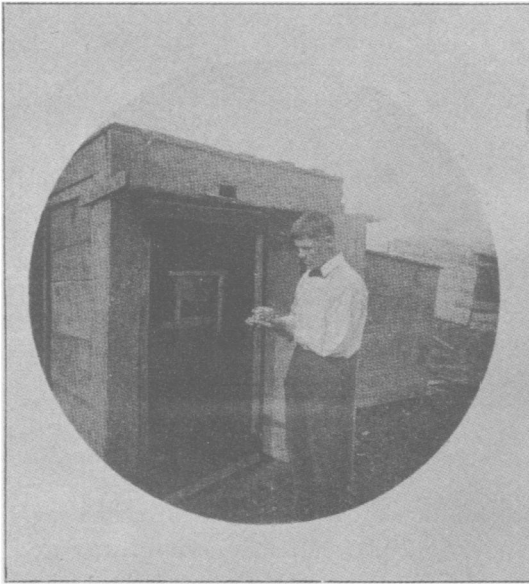
ASSEMBLY  
HALLCOURT HOUSE  
AND JAILRESIDENCE OF  
MR. GEORGE

and administer them, and the idea occurred to him of a boy legislature. Then, too, if they worked for their clothing, why not require them to work for their victuals? All these are just what people in the outside world are doing—why not copy their methods? and if so we have, sure enough, a Republic—yes, indeed, a Junior Republic. The idea was a flash, an inspiration—it carried our enthusiast off his feet with a shout—at once he announced his plan, and the summer of 1895 was the first year of the Junior Republic.

But the self-governing Republic was not born full-fledged. Mr. George was not ready to trust the boys. He made himself president with a veto on all laws. He appointed adult assistants as chief justice, chief of police, civil service examiners, board of health, and bank president. He let the contracts to adults.

The first summer convinced him that in every one of these positions the boys themselves would be superior to adults. They knew much better how to deal with their fellows. They would

also be more responsible to them, and would give them, therefore, a keener sense of their own responsibility for the execution of their own laws. Consequently, in the summer of 1896 adults were removed from all responsible positions, except the presi-



A MILLIONAIRE'S PASTIME—DOVECOTE

dency, and the boys were appointed by the president, and in 1897 another step towards democracy was taken in that a boy was made president by election of his peers. In all respects, therefore, the Junior Republic is now self-governing, and is a coalescence of the federal, state and city governments of the United States. The president is elected for one year, senators for two weeks,

representatives for one week, and officials are appointed on good behavior. The laws of the state of New York are the laws of the Republic, though subject to amendment by the legislature and president. These amendments, however, are all abrogated on the first of July each year, and, to remain valid, must be reënacted.

While in the forms of government the representative democracy has been perfected, the same does not yet hold for the ownership of property. This will appear from the very interesting monetary history of the Republic.

In 1895 Mr. George was owner and business manager of all property in the Republic. He employed boys and girls, paying

them wages in their card-board money (later tin coin) and they, in turn, paid him for board and lodging at the hotels. As a matter of form, and to give the government some material reason for existence, the citizens paid small taxes levied by the leg-



"ARISTOCRATS"

islature, though Mr. George as sole capitalist paid the bulk of the taxes. In 1896, in order to extend democracy, the contracts for hotels and mercantile establishments were let by the government to citizens on the payment of a license or percentage determined by auction. But Mr. George still retained ownership of the land and employed a large force in agricultural pursuits. He paid them wages daily, and as he had nothing to sell to the citizens, since his crops would not mature until after their return home the first of September, the money was not returned into his hands. As a result, the currency was expanded and continued to depreciate through rapid fluctuations until one dollar of



Republic money was worth only five to ten cents of American money. The method of determining this depreciation was to note the prices at which clothing and other goods from outside would sell at auction to the citizens in their currency, compared



A PAUPER

with the customary prices for the same in American currency. The ratio between the two prices would give the rate of depreciation. The causes of this growing depreciation were for several months inexplicable to either the citizens or their patron. It involved serious problems in the distribution of wealth and the contentment of the citizens. Out of it sprang the heated political

campaign between the "People's Party" and the "Free Tin" Party. The government being constantly in receipt of more money than it could use, owing to the growing surplus in the community at large and the feeling that something ought to be done to keep it in circulation, projected large public improvements, such as building highways, side-walks, drains and laying out parks. These were let to contractors, who, by paying their laborers fifty cents a day and foremen one dollar, were themselves often able to make as profit \$150 out of a \$200 contract. They thus became "millionaires," and flaunted their riches in the face of others, living at the most expensive hotels without the need of work; and the high prices which they paid both

depreciated the currency and placed luxuries beyond the reach of the commonalty. Rapidly there appeared a general feeling of remonstrance against these parvenus and a desire to curb their pride. Somehow, it was felt that the excessive currency furnished them their opportunities, and the People's or conservative party was organized, whose platform demanded a high tax rate and the arbitrary creation therefrom a government reserve in order to contract the currency.

The speculators now, in turn, organized the "Free Tin" party and their popular appeal was "high wages, plenty of work and prosperity."

They told their workmen that they now were able to pay but fifty cents a day, and if currency should be shortened, they could pay only twenty-five cents; whereas, as everyone knew, it required a minimum of fifty cents a day to pay for meals, lodging and taxes. These arguments carried with the voters, and the People's party was overwhelmed. The currency continued to depreciate, and the millionaires to flourish till the end of the season.

In 1897 Mr. George took the matter in hand and returned to his policy of 1895. He became again sole landed proprietor and capitalist. He considers this as far from the ideal, but as a means of regulating the currency, it is the only secure plan yet devised. He now pays directly, or through his sub-contractors,



DITCHING

all the employés, except government servants, and pays two-thirds of the taxes. He receives an income from the hotels and other sources, and consequently is able to control the currency at par, apart from the regulations by the government. The



FARMING

inference seems to be that popular sovereignty has failed in the field of the currency, just as we often hear it held that it must also fail in the greater republic outside.

By owning all the industries, Mr. George is also able to check the rise of millionaires. He can prevent the merely shrewd and unscrupulous from accumulating wealth as against the industrious and honest. He

does this by letting the contracts, not merely on the basis of the strict competitive system, as was done in 1896 by the government, but by awarding them to the more deserving in his private estimation. Thus, by monopolizing private property, he quietly controls the lives of the citizens regardless of the complete self-government vouchsafed to them. In this a more ideal justice is measured out, though, of course, in so far, the government has become a benevolent despotism rather than a democracy. This, too, has made the Republic less fascinating and less exciting than it was under the political and commercial contests of 1895, and outsiders might wish these competitive conditions had been retained, in order to see what sort of an ideal

commonwealth the citizens themselves might have worked out. Both Mr. George and the citizens feel this lack of complete self-government, and the plans for 1898 will resume again the democratic trend. Private property in land and all enterprises will



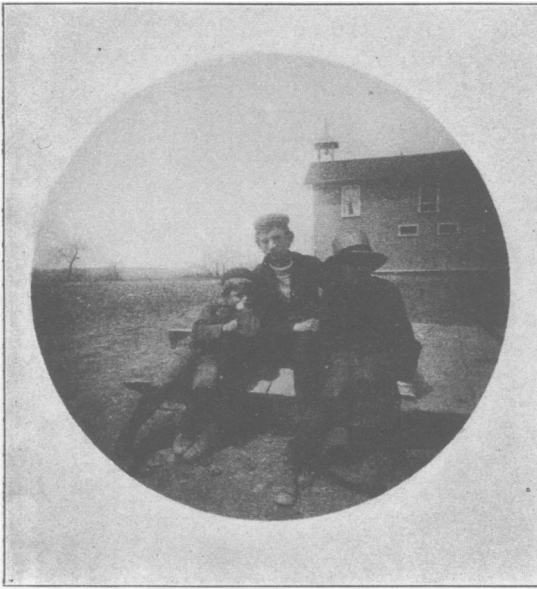
"NEVERWORKS"

be arranged for in some way, and the government will have entire control of the volume of currency.

At present the currency is easily kept at par, as far as the purchase of necessities is concerned. United States money has, of course, a wider value, but if the treasury of the Republic had an adequate reserve of candy with which to redeem its currency, the par value of the same could, in all respects, be steadily maintained. The management wishes to arrange for the redemption of a certain portion of its currency in United States money when the citizens return home, but at present the only redemption for the savings of the citizens is such clothing and provisions as may happen to be on hand. The outgoing citizens occasionally retain their Republic money and bring it back the

following summer for a few days of luxury before settling down to work.

The demoralizing effect upon the community occasioned by the millionaires and their sudden riches would be largely obvi-



TYPES OF THE "BETTER CLASSES"

ated if the government had other means of redemption than merely meals and lodgings. If the millionaires could purchase clothing, shoes, pictures and bric-a-brac for adorning their rooms, books and other useful imperishables, they would still feel the incentive to work, even with a large surplus of profits in hand, for the surplus would be turned at once into such permanent

acquisitions. As it is, the only use to be made of large earnings is to spend them on meals and lodgings throughout a long period of idleness. If the imperishables were donated by outsiders, or even manufactured in part by the citizens themselves with machinery and a plant like those of many prisons and reformatories, Mr. George would see his way again to return to the individual enterprise of 1896. It is toward this ideal that his new plans are tending.

New counterparts with the republic of history are continually appearing. The duration of the Republic was originally the two months of July and August. Beginning in the fall of 1895, there were five of the summer citizens who persuaded Mr. George

to keep them through the winter until the next summer. These he calls his "original residents;" they were the nucleus of a colony of thirty-two in the winter of 1896-7 and of fifty-three in the winter of 1897-8. These winter citizens, known as "resi-



THE ORIGINAL "RESIDENTS"—WINTER OF 1895-6

dents," continue the government through the year under the same constitution and laws, but they have become a patriciate, engrossing the offices, the property and profitable contracts, to the exclusion of the greater number of plebs, known as "summer citizens," who swarm in during the summer. The winter residents elect the president who appoints the administrative officials, and in the winter of 1896-7 they adopted a new constitution, providing that no citizen could be a senator or representative, who had not been a resident of the Republic for one month. This, of course, excluded the leaders of the summer citizens during the first half of their stay, and since, during this first month, the

majority of these leaders were arrested and convicted on criminal charges, they were further incapacitated for election the second month. The outcome has been that the summer citizens, having three-fourths of the votes, have cast their strength for the weak and inefficient of the winter residents, instead of the capable leaders, and the legislature has, therefore, been almost a nonentity. This is very much like ward politics at large. The residents of 1897-8 are planning to remove the restrictions on summer citizens, and this again will tend to give to the political life of 1898 some of the thrill of 1896.

The main obstacle at present to the successful working of the educational and reformatory principles of the Republic is this inroad of summer citizens. Experience shows that at least a year's continuous residence is required to saturate a boy with the spirit of self-help and responsibility. The first month or two is a period of depression and discouragement. The boy is arrested and convicted again and again, spends much of his time in jail and on the stone pile, and only begins to reap the rewards of upright and industrious living at about the time when he goes home. The boys who stay through the year get a closer acquaintance with Mr. George and become model citizens. It is intended to increase the number of residents and lessen that of summer citizens, so as to give a preponderance of at least three-fourths of the votes to the former; also to establish another "state" near by, exclusively for summer citizens.

The Republic is based upon the wage system. This is a system of indirect coercion grounded upon the necessities of the wage-earners for food, clothing, and shelter. Traditional educational methods of direct coercion through corporal punishment and despotic control are based upon the slave system. The indirect coercion is far more efficient, both as an industrial stimulus and an educational device. It is deliberate and searching; it stimulates thought and self-examination. I saw two boys go without breakfast, because on the day before they had loafed, and so failed to earn cash for a day's meals and lodging. Mr. George himself escapes the odium of enforcing this harsh pen-

alty, for it is enforced by the boy proprietor of the hotel, to whom it is a matter of business.

In 1895 taxes were levied to support the poor. Finally a bill was introduced in the legislature and enacted into law, stipu-



THE LAUNDRY

lating that after a certain day the paupers' table supported by the government should be abolished. There were a dozen paupers, who had contented themselves with the spare diet of that table. They treated the matter as a joke and predicted that when the day arrived, the citizens would do what the charities of New York had always done, feed the hungry whether deserving or not. But the citizens were tax-payers. When the day arrived the policemen ordered the paupers to move on. They moved; and before night had found work and earned enough to pay for a heavy supper. Since that day there have been no paupers. Of course, there is no problem of the unemployed in this Junior Republic, and so the paupers cannot throw the burden of proof upon the philanthropists.



If the wage system were uniform for all grades of labor, it would be no better than slavery as a means of individual progress. But by grading the pay according to the quality of service, higher motives than the craving for necessities can be evoked. The minimum wages paid by Mr. George are twelve cents an hour for six hours' work, or seventy-two cents a day. Curiously enough, when boys are the employers they pay ten or fifteen cents a day higher wages, but they compel their employes to work harder and somewhat longer. Policemen are paid ninety cents a day ; the chief of police \$1.25 ; senators and representatives \$2 a week ; police commissioners and other officers \$1 to \$2 a week. Civil service examinations are held by the civil service commissioners for the policemen and all appointive officials. The examinations cover the common branches of study as taught in the public schools and at the Republic.

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THE DAIRY